

# Iowa Department of Human Services

## Offer #401-HHS-008: Successful Transition to Adulthood

**Contact Information:** Mary Nelson, [mnelson1@dhs.stateia.us](mailto:mnelson1@dhs.stateia.us), (515) 281-5521

<b>This offer is for:</b>		<b>This offer includes the following appropriations:</b>
<b>X</b>	Status quo existing activity	Child and Family Services, General Administration

### **Result(s) Addressed:**

Provide support to youth who have left foster care at age 18, so they can more successfully transition to adult living:

- Participants finish high school or receive a GED
- Participants hold a job for 3 or more consecutive months

### **Program Description:**

The purpose of the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program is to ensure that youth in foster care are better prepared for the challenges and opportunities that adulthood presents, and that resources invested while they are young pay off over the long term.

### **Who:**

#### **Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program**

PAL serves Iowa youth who leave state paid foster care at the age of 18 or older and who are no longer eligible for voluntary foster care and who are engaged full-time in one or some combination of the following:

- Enrollment in a postsecondary educational training program or work training
- Employment

Approximately 500 youth in Iowa reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday while in foster care; that is, they are neither reunited with their birth families by the time they reach 18 nor placed in a permanent family through adoption or guardianship.

Currently, children are eligible to continue in foster care on a voluntary basis past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday only when they are still working toward their high school diploma or GED and meet one of the following conditions.

- Through age 18 if they are living in family foster care.
- Through age 19 if they are living in a supervised apartment setting.
- The youth is at imminent risk of being homeless or failing to graduate from high school or to obtain a GED, if the services are in the child's best interest, is available for the services, and an appropriate alternative service is available.

**What:**

The PAL program provides financial support to eligible youth who are receiving aftercare services. Aftercare services include case management support and services linking youth to community resources to assist them in their transition to self-sufficiency.

Youth enrolled in Iowa's PAL Program are eligible for additional financial support via a monthly stipend based upon the foster family basic daily maintenance rate for a youth aged 16 or over, as well as aftercare case management services. The amount of the stipend depends on a youth's earned and unearned income.

**How:****Program**

Youth receive PAL aftercare services in addition to the stipend through a contractual arrangement with a network of child welfare providers (known as the Iowa Aftercare Services Network). The primary goal of the program is for youth to achieve self-sufficiency through youth driven goals and to recognize and accept their personal responsibility for the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Services include case management, assisting the youth in developing self-sufficiency plans, counseling, assisting with community referrals for services and assisting the youth in securing SSI and completing the financial aid forms for youth wanting to attend college.

**Other Transition to Adulthood Programs Not Included in this Offer***elevate*<sup>TM</sup>

*elevate*<sup>TM</sup> provides, through local chapters, a forum for current and former foster care youth to connect with peers, develop leadership skills and advocate for improvements in the child welfare system. There are currently eight chapters across the state and about 200 members. Funding is from state and federal Chafee dollars. The state funds are within *Offer #401-HHS-007 Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice Community Services*.

Aftercare Services

DHS aftercare program provides support and services to youth and young adults ages 18 to 21 that have exited foster care and are participating in PAL as well as those that are not participating in PAL. Eleven agencies participate in a statewide network that provides services. At the end of SFY 2009, 131 youth were in the Aftercare program (an additional 334 youth were participating in the PAL component). DHS also funds ongoing evaluation of the program. Aftercare is funded primarily with federal funds from the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP).

Education & Training Vouchers (ETV)

This program provides financial assistance vouchers for youth that age out of foster care or who were adopted/entered a subsidized guardianship arrangement after the age of 16. The program provided 198 youth a total of \$767,294 in training and education vouchers in SFY 2008. The ETV program is funded by Federal funds from the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP).

All Iowa Opportunity Foster Care Grant Program

This program provides financial assistance for youth that age out of foster care and attend post-secondary education in Iowa. The program provided 99 youth a total of \$477,394 for post secondary education in SFY 2008. The program is administered by the Iowa Student Aid Commission and is funded with state funds.

### Medicaid for Independent Young Adults (MIYA)

The purpose of the MIYA program is to provide continued health care coverage to young adults transitioning from state care to young adulthood. Youth covered by the MIYA program receive the same services, as any other child under 21, who is eligible for Medicaid through existing Medicaid provider networks. Youth transitioning out of foster care are automatically reviewed for MIYA eligibility without filing a new Medicaid application. MIYA currently provides Medicaid coverage to an annual average 372 eligible youth in SFY 2009 who are: under age 21, were in a state paid foster care placement when they turned age 18, left foster care on or after May 1, 2006, and have countable income under 200% of the Federal poverty level. The state funds are within *Offer #401-HHS-003 Medical Services*.

### **Service Delivery**

DHS child welfare caseworkers in local offices are responsible for providing information to youth in foster care about the PAL program and other benefits available to them after they leave foster care at age 18. Eight (8) DHS Transition specialists who are located in the DHS service area offices also provide the following services. Funding for the eight Transition specialists comes from Federal Chafee dollars.

- Provide oversight and monitoring within their respective service areas regarding the overall transition planning process to ensure effectiveness, including results based youth-centered transition planning for each youth in foster care, age 16 and older, completion and regular review/update of the transition plan.
- Develop and deliver formal and informal training, based on service area needs, to internal and external staff and key stakeholders to facilitate understanding and implementation of a youth-centered transition process founded on evidence based and best practice principles and procedures.
- Provide consultation to assist DHS and JCS staff in linking youth in care to appropriate community resources and assist DHS and JCS staff, as appropriate, with difficult to transition cases.
- Assist local transition committees and communities to identify and address gaps and barriers in community services and supports to successful transition through collaboration.
- Determine eligibility for aftercare/PAL services for youth aging out of care and work with the aftercare providers to assist with the self-sufficiency plan for youth once out of care.
- Work with the ETV coordinator regarding getting youth post-secondary financial aid and assist in ensuring that the youth continues to get Medicaid once they have aged out of care (Medicaid coverage group – MIYA – Medicaid for Independent Youth Adults).

### **Service Support**

- *Contract Management:* DHS maintains a contract with a private agency for the delivery of aftercare services to support youth. This includes managing the procurement process and monitoring contractor performance.
- *Program support:* DHS staff are responsible for developing and maintaining the administrative rules and employees' manual for the program, to ensure compliance with all relevant state and federal laws and regulations.
- *Program monitoring:* DHS staff monitor program outcomes, manage program improvement plans, and provide data to staff, policy makers and the general public.
- *Federal programs:* DHS staff complete all state plans, state plan amendments, and program reporting required to claim federal funding. DHS staff also coordinate preparation for periodic federal program reviews.

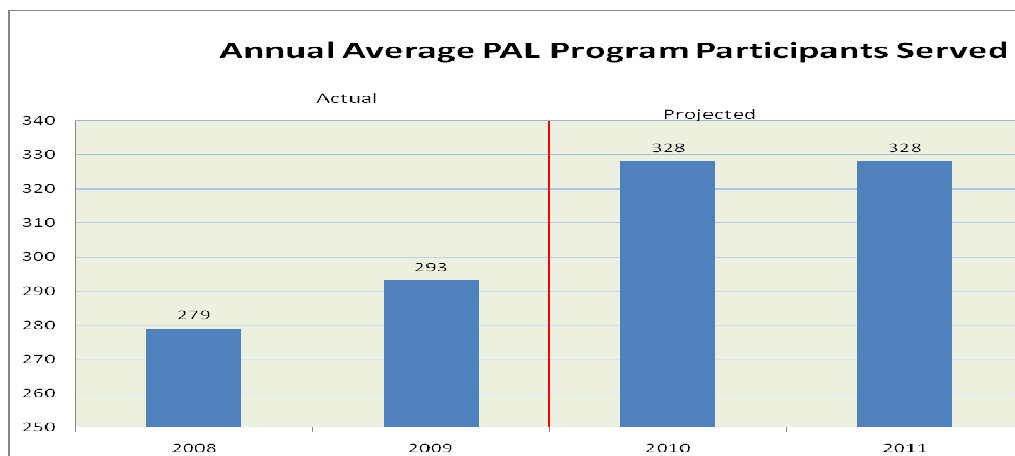
- *Constituent relations*: DHS staff work with constituent groups (e.g., *elevate*<sup>TM</sup>) and respond to constituent complaints and questions, as well as responding to appeals and requests for exceptions to policy.
- *Information technology*: Includes Iowa's child welfare information system that will support the new National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), mandated by the Federal government.
- *Financial accountability*: Includes budgeting, accounting, Federal/State reporting, cost allocation, and audit coordination and resolution.
- *Provider payment*: Includes distributing provider/vendor payments.
- *Corporate leadership*: Includes overall agency strategic management and accountability for the achievement of results.

## **Offer Description:**

### **Today's Activities and Results:**

This offer continues the PAL program for youth under age 21 who were in a state paid foster care placement when they turned age 18 and meet eligibility criteria on or after May 1, 2006.

- Although SFY 2010 will mark the fourth year of the PAL program, due to first year slow startup (SFY 2007), PAL enrollment is expected to increase. Enrollment is expected to stabilize at approximately 328 youth per month by SFY 2011. The chart below shows enrollment trends since the program began in SFY 2008.
- The \$2.8 M SFY 2009 PAL state appropriation would have funded a maximum average of 260 youth per month and was insufficient to serve all eligible youth. The SFY 2009 average monthly enrollment (293) far exceeded that number. To offset the shortfall and delay a waiting list, DHS diverted Federal (Chafee) funding and funds for provider performance incentives to cover additional PAL participants. Chafee funding will not be available in SFY 2010 to maintain this level of funding, due to reductions in Iowa's Federal Chafee award.



The Youth Policy Institute routinely collects results data from Aftercare Service Network providers about PAL program participants. This data indicates that PAL program participants show increases in education and employment

- 83% have finished high school or received a GED.,
- 67% have held a job for 3 or more consecutive months.

- 83% have a monthly budget to cover expenses.

DHS will be implementing several activities in SFY 2010 to improve outcomes for youth that transition from foster care at age 18.

- The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, enacted October 7, 2008, created a new opportunity for states to access federal funds to support extending foster care past age 18. The Iowa Children's Justice Initiative recently created a taskforce to assess the fiscal and programmatic implications of extending care to 21. The Finance Project (funded by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative) is providing no-cost technical assistance for programmatic exploration of the option to extend foster care in Iowa and will also lead a fiscal mapping effort to determine cost estimates. Final recommendations will be presented to the Children's Justice State Council before the end of calendar 2009.
- DHS will be soliciting bidders in SFY 2010 for the management and delivery of PAL and aftercare services. The bid will include performance measures and benchmarks drawn from the data that has been collected related to the program goals.
- DHS will be developing the new National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) mandated by the federal government. NYTD will include data on transition services provided to youth while they are in foster care and after they turn age 18, as well as data on outcomes for youth that transition from foster care to young adulthood. States are required to begin collecting data October 1, 2010.

## **Offer Justification:**

### **Legal Requirements:**

#### **Federal:**

Federal requirements related to foster care and transition are contained in Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, especially the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act.

#### **State:**

State requirements related to foster care and transition are found in Chapters 232 and 234 of the Iowa Code and 441 IAC 187.

### **Rationale:**

The PAL program ensures that youth leaving foster care at the age of 18 are better prepared for the challenges and opportunities that adulthood presents and that resources invested while they were in foster care pay off over the long term. Although technically adults, these youth face significant challenges. Often they are developmentally behind their peers. These youth need the same, if not significantly more emotional and educational/employment support than most other young adults need when they head out on their own.

Without additional assistance, too many are neither employed nor in school, have children that they are not able to parent, suffer from persistent mental illness or substance abuse disorders, find themselves without basic necessities, become homeless, or end up involved with the criminal justice system.

### **Improve Iowans' Health**

- Safe and healthy living environment for children, persons with special needs and vulnerable populations

Up to 25% of youth transitioning out of Iowa's foster care system experience homelessness within their first year after discharge. Continued support and services provides youth who transition out of foster care with a safe and healthy living environment.

- Strengthen and support families

Many of the youth that transition out of foster care have been in care many years and lack positive stable relationships with family members or other significant adults. Many have had multiple placements and have experienced multiple separations. Studies have found that many of these youth act out their loneliness and isolation in self-destructive ways or through aggression towards others. PAL provides support to connect youth to supportive adults in the community.

#### Enhancing Community Safety

- Community Involvement–Youth Development

Chapin Hall found that youth who were discharged from foster care at age 18 were 1.5 times more likely to be arrested and 2 times more likely to be convicted of a crime than youth who continued in care. The PAL program provides the necessary services and support, including financial, and most importantly, connection with a positive support system, that when lacking, often is a root cause of conviction of a crime.

- Ready-to-Learn Students

Many foster care youth approach the transition to adulthood with significant educational deficits. Over one-third of the young people in a Chapin Hall study had received neither a high school diploma nor a GED, compared to fewer than 10 percent of their same-age peers. The PAL program, providing additional financial support in addition to case management support and services after age 18 significantly increases their ability to further their education past high school/GED. Chapin Hall found that youth who continued to receive care were enrolled in 2 and 4-year colleges at 3 times the rate of youth who had been discharged at age 18.

- Secure and Nurturing Families

Many of the youth transitioning from foster care are unable to turn to their parents or other family members for financial and/or emotional support. Services and supports through the PAL program offer youth the ability to effectively deal with what their biological families are often unable to give by providing them effective, positive alternatives for financial and/or emotional support and by linking them to community resources, including positive adult mentors.

#### Transform Iowa's Economy

- Develop an Educated, Productive Workforce

Services and support through the PAL program for this population of youth once they exit foster care provides for better employment skills and employment opportunities, leading to resources necessary for self-sufficiency as adults.

**Results:**

<b>Result:</b>	<b>SFY 2009 Actual Level</b>	<b>SFY 20010 Budget Level</b>	<b>SFY 2011 Offer Level</b>
Participants finish high school or receive a GED	83%	83%	83%
Participants hold a job for 3 or more consecutive months	67%	67%	67%